



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

*Provisional*

## 9026<sup>th</sup>

meeting

Friday, 29 April 2022, 10.40 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Dame Barbara Woodward . . . . .	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China . . . . .	Mr. Xing Jisheng
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Gasri
	Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Koumby Missambo
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
	India . . . . .	Mr. Mathur
	Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya . . . . .	Ms. Mbabu
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills

## Agenda

### The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/281)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

#### **Letter dated 30 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/281)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/281, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu:** It is an honour to address this Security Council meeting commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the United Kingdom for its long-standing support to both the Convention and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the most important achievements in the history of disarmament. The prohibition and scheduled elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction 25 years ago was a truly remarkable outcome. It was not easy, but it is an outstanding example of what the international community can achieve when it is united in purpose.

The unprecedented large-scale use of toxic chemicals during the First World War shocked the entire world and prompted negotiations on a number of instruments meant to prevent such a recurrence, most prominently the 1925 Geneva Protocol to The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, which banned the use

of chemical and biological weapons. The CWC, in prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer and, of course, use of chemical weapons, created a more far-reaching and comprehensive prohibition. When we think back to the horrors of chemical warfare, from the victims from the fields of Flanders to the Middle East, it is obvious that the CWC has made the world not only a safer place, but also a more humane one.

The past 25 years have seen much accomplished in pursuit of the elimination of chemical weapons. The Convention is nearing universality, with 193 States parties and 165 signatories. Thanks to the hard work of the OPCW and its staff and the cooperation of States, 99 per cent of the chemical-weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been verifiably destroyed.

The Convention has significantly benefited from its partnership with industry, including its unique role in the negotiation of the CWC. Industry has played a vital ongoing role in facilitating the technological and economic benefits of chemistry and advancing chemical safety and security. Industry's role in the CWC is a fine example, which should be replicated in other relevant negotiations, including those related to emerging technologies.

I am proud of the robust and long-standing partnership between the United Nations and the OPCW Technical Secretariat, which is dedicated to achieving the elimination of chemical weapons. That close cooperation and the mutually reinforcing nature of our work were exemplified by the United Nations investigation into the allegation of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

I would like to express my appreciation for the leadership shown by OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias and commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat for its professionalism, dedication and perseverance.

It is an unfortunate fact that today many of the CWC's historic accomplishments have been overshadowed by the continued use of chemical weapons. I can assure Council members that both the OPCW and the United Nations have worked, and will continue to work, closely to respond to those challenges and in defence of the CWC.

No example showcases that damage better than the numerous documented instances of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW confirmed the complete destruction of all chemical weapons declared by Syria on 4 of January 2016. Unfortunately, despite the accession of Syria to the CWC, the OPCW continues to document instances of chemical weapons use in Syria.

Those reports are a wake-up call to the international community about the continuing threat posed by those inhumane weapons. The horrific images of the victims of chemical weapons, including hundreds of injured and casualties, should haunt us all.

The objective and professional nature of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, including its Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and Investigation and Identification Team, must be respected. Its work is crucial to reinforcing the CWC and bringing the perpetrators of chemical weapon use to justice.

Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly called on the international community to act. Yet the Security Council has not fulfilled its responsibility to hold the perpetrators of those heinous acts accountable. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances is unacceptable. We must act together to shore up the norm against the use of chemical weapons and strengthen the CWC, which remains integral and necessary bedrock of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

I assure the Council that the United Nations will continue to strive with partners, such as the OPCW Technical Secretariat, and all its Member States to restore the norm against chemical weapons and to ensure that those responsible for their use are held to account.

Turning to my regular briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the OPCW on its activities related to that matter. As per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 27 April 2022 to receive an update on developments and ascertain his views.

I regret to inform Council members that there has been little, or no, change in the past month on issues related to this file. Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic remain as previously informed. I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic on all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a former chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical warfare agents.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat also expects further information and documentation from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding damage caused during the 8 June 2021 attack on a military facility housing a declared former chemical weapons production facility. I have also been advised that the Technical Secretariat has not yet received a response to the request for information regarding the unauthorized movement of remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. The Syrian Arab Republic must respond with urgency to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

Since April 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has attempted to schedule the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority. This deployment has been delayed owing to the continued refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to issue an entry visa for one DAT expert. I understand that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has repeatedly stressed that the applicable legal framework does not entitle the Syrian Arab Republic to select experts. The DAT will only be in a position to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic once entry visas are issued to all DAT experts.

I have been informed that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has proposed a limited round of consultations in Beirut, Lebanon. These consultations would allow for an assessment of the status of all outstanding issues, discussions on the possible way forward, and receipt of documents requested by the Secretariat. I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has agreed to the limited round of consultations, while at the same time requesting the exclusion of one OPCW expert.

Let me state yet again: until these outstanding issues are closed, the international community cannot have full confidence that the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical-weapons programme has been eliminated. To this end, I regret to also inform the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November 2018.

I note that an initial agenda has been negotiated for the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. However, the OPCW Technical Secretariat is awaiting the Syrian Arab Republic's position on the latest version of the agenda. The proposed meeting would be an important opportunity to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the two parties.

Consistent with previous updates to the Council, the OPCW FFM remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been advised that the FFM is preparing for upcoming deployments that remain subject to the evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC.9), adopted on 21 April 2021, I have been advised that, unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2. I therefore repeat my call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this regard.

The Chemical Weapons Convention calls upon us to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. The Convention has been the most important step in achieving that goal. But as events continue to prove, we cannot take its success for granted. I hope that the Security Council will take seriously

its responsibilities in safeguarding this invaluable instrument and the norm against chemical-weapon use.

**The President:** I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): I thank the High Representative for her briefing this morning.

I would also like to commend the continued diligence and professionalism of the independent experts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We salute their tireless efforts to ensure the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

As the High Representative has just highlighted, today we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force. For a quarter of a century, the United States and other nations that share our commitment to a safer world have endeavoured to rid the world of chemical weapons and deter their use by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. In that time, the OPCW has achieved great success, with the Convention having reached near-universality.

Relevant to this meeting, the OPCW oversaw the speedy destruction of Syria's declared chemical-weapons stockpile. We now know, unfortunately, that Syria's declaration was incomplete. Our presence in this Chamber today and the Security Council's ongoing monthly meetings to discuss this subject are a reminder that the success of the Convention and the OPCW — and more broadly, any success in the realm of arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — cannot be taken for granted. Each month, in the Security Council, we are forced to reckon with the fact that the use of these horrific weapons, once thought to be relegated to history, has resumed. We are reminded that we must collectively remain vigilant to prevent the emergence and normalization of chemical-weapons use.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria agreed to never, under any circumstances, use chemical weapons. Yet we uncontestedly know, from the independent reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), that the Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons against its own people on at least eight occasions since joining the Convention.

Unfortunately, the IIT's work is not done, as it continues to investigate several additional incidents of chemical-weapons use. And the picture is even more grim than that: the United States assesses that the Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons at least 50 times since the conflict in Syria began. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria agreed to fully disclose the precise location, aggregate quantity and detailed inventory of the chemical weapons it possessed. Yet, as we have heard countless times from the High Representative and OPCW Director-General Arias, Syria's declaration still cannot be considered complete and accurate, nearly nine years after joining the Convention.

In the face of irrefutable proof, documented by the meticulous work of the OPCW, that Syria is flouting its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Al-Assad regime, in this Chamber, hurls preposterous accusations of bias at the OPCW's independent and professional experts in a failed effort to impugn them and distract from proven facts. Russia, which is itself in violation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention for its repeated use of chemical weapons, and which lacks, frankly, even the most remedial semblance of credibility when it comes to international peace and security, continues to peddle falsehoods in an effort to undermine the OPCW, repeatedly using its Security Council veto to shield Syria from accountability for its atrocities.

As we collectively mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United States once again calls on Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW as it is bound to do by resolution 2118 (2013) and to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. That includes stopping its obstruction of the work of the OPCW and fully declaring its chemical-weapons stockpile and programmes for destruction under international oversight. We also call on Russia to act responsibly and cease its efforts to undermine the Chemical Weapons Convention by protecting Syria from accountability for its inexcusable use of chemical weapons.

In conclusion, the most meaningful way to observe today's twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention entering into force is for every one of us to be faithful to the commitments contained in the Convention.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for presenting the

latest report (see S/2022/281) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). Unfortunately, it is virtually a carbon copy of the previous report (see S/2022/181). Those documents have long been based on a presumption of the guilt of Damascus. Whatever steps the Syrians take towards satisfying the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, they are never enough.

In principle, all the reports of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to the Security Council could be duly summarized in advance, without wasting the Council's time every month on a discussion of identical reports, especially as experience has shown that the debate on the Syrian chemical dossier in the Security Council has not been hampered by a lack of discussion.

We have repeatedly voiced our position on the groundlessness of the claims against Syria, especially in the context of its initial declaration. I will not go into detail today. In the report before us, what struck us was yet another inconsistency in the accusatory anti-Syrian narrative. Its premise rests on the idea that the Syrian side is uncooperative with regard to the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and is based on a single argument — the failure to issue a visa to one of the Team's members.

First, it should be recalled that cooperation with the Team is part of the voluntary bilateral commitments that Syria has made. Beyond that, however, it raises the question: Does all bilateral cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrians depend on a single expert? What if that expert were unable to come to Syria for another reason? Would the Technical Secretariat use that reason to cancel the twenty-fifth round of consultations and suspend the discussion on the Syrian initial declaration, the importance and urgency of which our Western colleagues have raised repeatedly?

With regard to visas, the Russian experts who are supposed to participate in activities at Headquarters in New York have repeatedly encountered the challenge of the non-issuance of visas, even though the host country is obliged to issue visas in a timely manner. We note the double standards in the visa-related accusations against Syrians.

We would ask the question: Even if the Syrian side were to agree to issue a visa to the Team's expert, where is the guarantee that the Technical Secretariat would



not fabricate another pretext to postpone consultations and blame Damascus once again?

It should be recalled in that regard that the Syrians were ready to host the Team as early as last summer, but OPCW Director-General Arias publicly refused to send the Team to Damascus owing to the uncomfortable environment that he said members would face in carrying out their work. As a result, the consultations were significantly delayed. The report does not make a single reference to that but only makes further attempts to shift the blame onto the Syrians.

We therefore view the new excuses provided by the Technical Secretariat and the OPCW Director-General to mean that The Hague is simply not interested in constructive discussions with the Syrian side on the subject of the initial declaration. We also find it abnormal that the Director-General, who has held his post for more than four years, has to date avoided visiting Syria.

In that regard, we would ask Mrs. Nakamitsu: From the perspective of her extensive experience with the United Nations and the practices of the Secretariat, how common is it for the head of an entity never to have visited the country that is the focus of its mandate and to be apprised of the situation on the ground only through its staff's reports? Are there other such examples in the United Nations system? We believe that the consequences of such a political appointment are having an extremely negative impact on the effectiveness of the OPCW in carrying out its mandate.

Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Russia was involved in the very inception of the Convention. For us, therefore, being committed to its implementation is not just a formality. We believe that it our moral duty to implement the Convention in good faith and do everything we can to strengthen it. That is why, despite the difficult circumstances, we supported the consensus on the text of the press statement (SC/14876) issued by the President today. We also supported resolution 2629 (2022) on Libya, but for some reason we were criticized for it today.

We are proud of the fact that, in 2017, Russia fulfilled its obligations with regard to the destruction of chemical weapons ahead of schedule and under strict international oversight. That fact is confirmed by the report of the OPCW Director-General of October

2017. We urge those who have not yet fulfilled their obligations under the Convention to follow our example.

Today we pay tribute to the Convention as a unique disarmament mechanism to which there is no alternative. The elimination of Syrian chemical-military capabilities is an example of the Convention's effectiveness. By acceding to the CWC, Damascus has faithfully fulfilled all its obligations in that regard, as the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council in June 2014. The final elimination of Syria's chemical-military capabilities was confirmed in 2016 by the OPCW Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties.

That outcome was made possible by the strong commitment of the Syrian authorities to the political decision to abandon their chemical-military programme and the choice made by the international community to advocate for the establishment of conventional mechanisms.

But no matter how unique and valuable an instrument the CWC is in itself, the way its implementation is monitored by the OPCW is of fundamental importance. In that regard, the organization has had its ups over the past 25 years and — as we have unfortunately seen in recent years — its downs. A few years ago, we saw the first buds of a dangerous tendency to politicize the work of the OPCW, and today they are in full bloom.

As the Syrian chemical dossier has shown, the OPCW is turning from an independent and impartial steward of the Convention into an instrument for the punishment of those who do not please Western countries. Unlawful decisions are being imposed on its governing bodies to give quasi-prosecutorial powers to the Technical Secretariat. It conducts biased investigations into violations of CWC norms and uses them as a pretext for exerting political pressure.

The Technical Secretariat itself persecutes freethinkers who disagree with signing off on political orders from above. At the same time, the leadership of the Technical Secretariat refuses to speak directly about all those dangerous tendencies and has no intention of rectifying them.

We have a long list of such egregious examples. It includes the infamous report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the Douma incident in 2018, the final version of which was radically redacted in an illustration of anti-Syrian bias under the pressure

exerted by certain delegations and in defiance of the glaring facts. One extremely shameful aberration is the activity of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose establishment was railroaded through the Executive Council in violation of the principle of consensus and article XV of the CWC.

The flawed methodology of both the IIT and the FFM directly violates the Convention and the principles of conducting investigations in terms of the collection and preservation of evidence and the chain of custody. The reports are prepared on the basis of information collected remotely from biased sources, primarily from the infamous White Helmets.

The culmination of those unscrupulous practices was that, for the first time in the history of the organization, a sovereign State complying with the Convention in good faith was stripped of its rights. That punitive decision was pushed through by Western delegations in violation of CWC norms and the principle of consensus. That has left the OPCW, at its twenty-fifth anniversary, with very serious systemic issues and a considerably tarnished reputation. Damage has also been done to the integrity of the Convention itself, which concerns us greatly.

If the situation is not rectified, the OPCW will lose its prestige in the very near future. It will become an instrument for implementing the geopolitical tasks of a very small group of countries. The Convention will then become a punitive instrument, which will strike a blow at the foundation of the chemical weapons prohibition regime and the non-proliferation architecture as a whole. It will give rise to distrust in other international instruments in the area of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We call upon the leadership of the organization to take decisions, rectify its mistakes and recover the OPCW's inherent spirit of professional, de-politicized cooperation and apply it to overcome real challenges faced by the international community in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, primarily with regard to the threat of the use of toxic chemicals and warfare agents by terrorist and extremist entities. Following his re-election as Director-General, Mr. Arias will now have a second chance to do that.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize again that despite the issue of politicization, which aggravates the work of the OPCW, the Convention itself remains relevant. It remains the only example of a universal

multilateral treaty that bans a whole class of weapons of mass destruction. Russia unconditionally and effectively supports the Convention and is committed to its letter and spirit. Our question is, How are its provisions being implemented by the OPCW?

We are convinced that, so long as there is political will on the part of the leadership of the organization, it is possible to rectify the current issues. We stand ready to contribute in every possible way and call upon other members of the Council to do the same.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): I, too, would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

As others have noted, today we mark 25 years since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Convention's aim to make the world safe from the threat of chemical weapons, through a comprehensive and verifiable ban, is as important today as ever. On this important anniversary, Ireland takes the opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), its Director-General and the staff of the Technical Secretariat.

A key element of the Convention is the establishment of the OPCW to ensure a credible, transparent verification regime to verify the destruction of chemical weapons and prevent their re-emergence. That the Convention has been such a success is in large part thanks to the continued integrity, professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW. The Security Council has a crucial role to play in supporting the ongoing work of the Convention and upholding the legal norm against chemical weapons. The use of those weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is an affront to international law, on which we all depend for our security and well-being.

Unfortunately, however, 25 years after the Convention's entry into force the recent marked increase in the use of chemical weapons presents a serious threat to international peace and security. The ongoing case of Syria remains a significant challenge, and the failure to resolve that case represents a serious risk to the effective operation of the Convention.

Thousands of Syrian civilians have experienced the devastating effects of chemical weapons at the hands of the Syrian armed forces and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, as evidenced in reports of the United

Nations and OPCW. At the same time, we see continued efforts by Syria and Russia to undermine and politicize the work of OPCW in order to deflect attention from serious culpability.

It is essential that we, as the Council, uphold our responsibilities in resolving this file. We must be clear in our full support for the OPCW and its ongoing work in Syria and in rejecting efforts to undermine the OPCW. We must continue to hold Syria to its obligations under the CWC and Council resolutions. Equally, Syria must stop its policy of equivocation and delay and engage in serious and meaningful cooperation with the OPCW.

The Technical Secretariat and the Conference of the States Parties have made clear the concrete actions necessary to resolve the outstanding issues with Syria's declarations. It is for Syria to implement those actions and provide the necessary clarity on all outstanding matters.

It is unacceptable that Syria has prevented the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team for the past year, despite the efforts demonstrated by the Technical Secretariat to facilitate a meeting. The arrangements for the proposed meeting between Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad, also outstanding for a year, must be settled quickly, and the meeting should focus on achieving concrete outcomes.

It is time for Syria to move on from empty words and delays. Ireland will continue to support all efforts to resolve the outstanding issues on this file.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I also welcome the delegations of Syria, Iran and Turkey to today's meeting.

Before addressing the specific case of Syria, Mexico believes that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) should be celebrated.

It one of the treaties of the disarmament architecture. With 193 States parties, it represents the highest standard of verification in a multilateral treaty on the prohibition and elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Mexico took

an active part in the negotiations on the CWC, as we believed that that instrument would assist in achieving general and complete disarmament, as well as ensuring international cooperation in the chemical industry on activities for peaceful purposes.

To continue to strengthen this regime, the States parties to the CWC must meet their obligations and commitments under the Convention and the relevant decisions taken by the Executive Council and the Conference of States Parties to the Convention. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge and support the work and professionalism of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat.

Thanks to the regime established by the Convention, we have made progress towards a world free of such weapons. The worrisome reports that have confirmed the use of chemical weapons in recent years compel us to pay attention to the full implementation of the Convention.

That is why we deplore the fact that, at each monthly discussion of the Syria file, we have met with very little progress. Discrepancies remain on 20 outstanding items of the initial declaration, and it has not been possible to conduct a new round of consultations, as one member of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues to be denied a visa. Although Syria agreed to conduct a round of limited consultations in Lebanon, it imposed conditions.

Those are just some of the obstacles that have led to the consultations between the DAT and the national Syrian authorities being postponed for months. We reiterate that one of the goals of the DAT is to assist Syria in eliminating the discrepancies in its initial declaration in order to fully comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Furthermore, we call upon Syria to explain the unauthorized transfer of two chlorine cylinders related to the incident that occurred in Douma in April 2018. Similarly, the tripartite agreement among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria expires on 30 June. Mexico calls upon the parties to reach a more broad-ranging agreement that will provide adequate conditions to facilitate the mandate of the Technical Secretariat.

Mexico once again categorically condemns the use of chemical weapons or any other weapon of mass



destruction, anywhere, at any time, by any actor and under any circumstances.

The work of the Security Council should be to prevent risks in the deteriorated international security environment due to this situation, not in spite of it. The Council must show leadership and consolidate a common front for the defence of multilateral legal instruments. A more secure and peaceful world should be based on international law and cooperation, not on weapons, much less on weapons of mass destruction with irreversible consequences.

Before concluding, this being the last formal meeting of the month, Mexico acknowledges and commends the efforts of the British presidency in conducting the work of the Council during the month of April.

**Mrs. Gasri** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Today we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which enabled the destruction of 99 per cent of declared chemical-weapon stockpiles, thanks to the integrity and professionalism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as others have noted today.

We thought we were done with these shocking weapons. Yet, a quarter of a century after the establishment of the OPCW and nearly 100 years after their prohibition in warfare, the threat of their use has, instead, become commonplace.

Clearly, the Syrian regime's repeated use of these weapons against its own population has broken a taboo. Since 2013, OPCW and United Nations investigators have conclusively demonstrated the use of such weapons on eight occasions. Eight years after the unanimous adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), we lament the lack of progress. The OPCW Director-General's report (see S/2022/281) is once again very clear in that regard.

The regime continues to obstruct the work of the OPCW. It is not issuing the necessary visas for the deployment of the Syrian initial Declaration Assessment Team. It interferes in the selection of inspectors. Under false pretences, the regime seeks to obstruct the missions of the Technical Secretariat. We once again strongly call on Syria to shed light on its stockpiles, to answer the questions asked and to comply with its international obligations. Only then can the rights and

privileges suspended a year ago at the Conference of the States Parties be restored.

Under difficult conditions, the Technical Secretariat has shown tenacity and great professionalism. The disinformation campaigns against it must stop. We will follow very closely the upcoming consultations of the Investigation and Identification Team.

It is essential that perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks be identified and held accountable. That is the reason for our continued advocacy for the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. There will be no respite for war criminals who use these weapons, which, for so many years, have been banned under international law.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I also would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. We highly appreciate her repeated calls for Syrian cooperation and for unity in the Security Council in order to ensure accountability on the use of chemical weapons. We deeply regret the finding of a deliberate lack of cooperation by Syria with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Today we continue to face a situation that has barely changed since the most recent Security Council meeting on 10 March 2022 (see S/PV.8990). There is no progress in the discussions between the OPCW and the Syrian Government. There is therefore no progress on the next inspection in Syria. Another seven weeks have been lost, for the simple reason that Syria wants to select the inspectors, which it has no right to do. This deadlock hinders the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), and Syria's chemical weapons programme remains outside the control of the international community.

The one hundred-second monthly report (see S/2022/281) of the OPCW clearly assesses that, at this stage, due to identified gaps, inconsistencies and unresolved discrepancies, the latest declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Like many times before, we are once again receiving the same response, the same incomplete document that does not answer the questions posed.

We therefore continue to wait for Syria to demonstrate concretely and unambiguously its willingness to cooperate with the OPCW with regard to all the demands set out in the OPCW report, in

accordance with resolution 2118 (2013). Syria's refusal — supported by Russia — to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, is irresponsible and unacceptable. Albania continues to fully support the professional, independent and impartial work of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat.

The Security Council and its members have the responsibility to protect the international non-proliferation regime, which underpins our collective security. It is one of the most successful disarmament regimes in the world. It has ensured the destruction of over 98 per cent of declared-chemical weapons stockpiles.

Our discussions cannot, and should not, in any way call into question the full cooperation of any State under investigation by the OPCW, as it is our common responsibility to protect populations from any attack using chemical weapons. There cannot, and must not, be impunity for the use of chemical weapons — not in Syria, not elsewhere.

Albania rejects all attempts to politicize the work of the OPCW, which would serve only to delay Syria's implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), thereby also damaging the Security Council's credibility. We therefore strongly reject any attempt to discredit the OPCW in order to cover up the horrific crimes committed by the Syrian regime and escape accountability. As we know full well, a lack of accountability promotes impunity — but impunity is neither a choice nor an alternative. Those responsible must, and will, be brought to justice.

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing on the progress towards the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), let me express Norway's full commitment to its provisions. Together, the CWC and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) represent a milestone in global disarmament. Yet clearly, that work must continue. We call for the immediate ratification or accession to the CWC by the States that have not yet done so.

The Security Council is once again meeting with few developments to report in the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. It is particularly regrettable that the

deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Syria, which was proposed for earlier in April, did not occur. We note the plans for a limited round of consultations in Lebanon, and we urge that positive progress be made towards cooperation and discussions on the way forward.

However, we would also like to underline that resolution 2118 (2013) explicitly mentions Syria's obligations to accept the personnel designated by the OPCW, to provide those personnel with immediate and unfettered access and to respect their right to inspect any and all sites. It is vital to return to regular deployments of the DAT, with entry visas issued to all DAT experts.

The Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Norway urges Syria to fully cooperate with the OPCW and to provide sufficient technical information and explanations to close the 20 outstanding issues. It is critical that Syria complete the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Let me conclude by underlining that accountability must be ensured for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. Norway remains steadfastly confident in the work of Director-General Arias and the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African countries members of the Security Council (A3), that is, Gabon, Kenya and Ghana.

We are grateful to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing on the status of the implementation of the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and stress the relevance of the continuing partnership between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

We welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey in this meeting.

As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on

Their Destruction, the international community, and the Security Council in particular, must be awakened to the potential re-emergence and increasing threats of chemical warfare and take steps to accelerate action towards a world free of chemical weapons.

The A3 collectively stands against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. We remain committed to the established norms against the use of chemical weapons and all efforts to eliminate their production, storage or use, and reiterate our support for resolution 2118 (2013), which provides the framework for the expeditious and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

We thank the OPCW for its report covering the period of 24 February to 23 March 2022 (see S/2022/281) and express our support for its work as the foremost body responsible for ensuring the full implementation of the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

In that regard, we welcome the continued efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to carry out its mandate and its readiness to deploy to Syria, subject to the easing of travel restrictions and the difficulties imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The A3 takes note of the verification of the destruction of all 27 chemical-weapon production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic in furtherance of its obligations. We also note the Syrian National Authority's submission to the Executive Council of its 100th monthly report regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons as well as its chemical-weapons production facilities, as required of it by the Executive Council.

However, we are concerned by the Technical Secretariat's assessment that the declarations submitted by the Syrian National Authority still cannot be considered as accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention, resolution 2118 (2013) and the decisions of the Executive Council. The unaddressed gaps, inconsistencies and outstanding issues in Syria's initial and subsequent declarations must be addressed.

We note that the convening of the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Syria has once again been held in abeyance owing to the denial of entry visas to the full complement of the Declaration Assessment Team. We continue to encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to grant the necessary entry visas to all members of

the team, in compliance with its commitments. We believe also that enhanced cooperation between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority would be useful in order to make progress in that regard.

We take note of the ongoing discussions for the holding of limited consultations in Beirut and look forward to a favourable update at subsequent briefings. We also note the Technical Secretariat's request of October 2020, relating to all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a former chemical-weapons production facility that was declared as never having been used as such, as well as requests for information regarding the damage caused to a military facility that housed a declared former such facility reportedly attacked on 8 June 2021, remain outstanding.

As expressed in our previous statements, we believe that direct high-level exchanges between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Director-General would be helpful in building confidence and providing the impetus needed to advance the various aspects of the programme and encourage greater commitment to strengthening cooperation.

We also look forward to receiving further information on the subsequent rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre that have been planned for this year.

We note that the tripartite agreement concluded among the OPCW, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) ends on 30 June, and we encourage its extension to maintain the supportive role of UNOPS in the implementation of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

The A3 takes note of the continuing efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) as mandated by the relevant Executive Council decisions and reiterates the need for them to remain independent, transparent and impartial as they carry out their respective mandates.

We will continue to be supportive of accountability measures to strengthen deterrence and reinforce the well-established norms against the use of chemical weapons.

Finally, we urge the support of the Council in addressing more constructively those issues that constrain meaningful progress in the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). The early closure of the elimination of Syria's chemical-weapons programme forms an important part of our common goal of international peace and security.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

As mentioned by the speakers before me, today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is a global achievement that has contributed to the destruction of 99 per cent of chemical-weapons stockpiles worldwide. For that reason, it is imperative for us to continue making that international effort. In that regard, we welcome today's press statement (SC/14876) commemorating that anniversary.

The United Arab Emirates would like on this occasion to reiterate its principled position of rejecting and explicitly condemning the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. The use of such weapons constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the CWC and the international law and poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Achieving progress on the chemical-weapons dossier related to the Syrian crisis requires addressing the existing gaps. In the first place, the holding of a constructive and meaningful dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Arab Republic should be encouraged. In that regard, we look forward to the anticipated meeting between the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Director-General of the organization, as well as the limited consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Declaration Assessment Team, to be held in Lebanon. We urge both sides to work together to forge ahead and consider all available alternatives to facilitate the team's visit to Damascus.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made towards the complete elimination of chemical weapons, the serious threats that they pose continue to exist, in particular when they are acquired by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

(Da'esh), which poses a grave threat to international peace and security.

As we recently witnessed in Al-Hasakah, terrorist groups continue to develop their methods of attack, seeking to obtain advanced weapons such as chemical weapons to achieve their dangerous goals. Accordingly, we stress the importance of continuing the fight against Da'esh in Syria to prevent it from rearranging its ranks or acquiring chemical weapons.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of making progress on the chemical dossier, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013), as well as all other dossiers concerned with resolving the Syrian crisis.

**Mr. Mathur** (India): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her update today.

We have taken note of the contents of the most recent monthly report by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/281). We have also noted the recent monthly submission made by Syria detailing measures undertaken to implement its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We encourage continued engagement between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve the outstanding issues. We are hopeful that the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority will be organized as soon as possible. Furthermore, we also hope that the next round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre will be held at an early date.

Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We support the collective efforts by all the parties to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the Convention is maintained to the fullest.

India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. Such an



investigation should follow scrupulously the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility enshrined under it to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

India has also repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. The reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have also referred to the repeated deployment of chemical weapons by United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups and those affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. The international community's collective fight against terrorism will be strengthened by ensuring accountability for the grave and inhuman acts of terror committed by terrorists and terrorist groups. To that end, India has made a contribution of \$200,000 to support the investigations of the Investigative Team.

India continues to believe that progress on other tracks would also help in facilitating the overall political peace process in Syria, as underscored in resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mr. Xing Jisheng** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). For 25 years, the Convention has played an important role in safeguarding international peace and security. Humankind has been moving towards a vision of a world free of chemical weapons.

China is a founding State party to the CWC. We support the comprehensive and balanced implementation of the CWC and the defence of the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries with respect to the peaceful use of chemicals. We call on the country concerned to seriously fulfil its obligations under the CWC and complete the destruction of stockpiled and abandoned chemical weapons as soon as possible. I wish to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China has always called for dialogue and consultations to solve the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration on chemical weapons submitted by Syria. We welcome the active preparation by the Technical Secretariat and Syria for in-person meetings between the Director-General and the Syrian Foreign

Minister. We hope that the two parties will finalize meeting arrangements as soon as possible and avail themselves of that opportunity to enhance mutual trust and cooperation.

The Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat are discussing the arrangements for the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations. China calls on the Technical Secretariat to respect the State party's concerns with regard to visas and move technical consultations forward in a flexible way in order to prevent the assessment of the initial declaration from reaching an impasse.

The issue of chemical weapons is of crucial importance. The CWC is the legal basis and benchmark in that regard. The OPCW's investigation and attribution of accountability for the alleged use of chemical weapons should be carried out strictly within the framework of the Convention. The Technical Secretariat must strictly adhere to the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity, among other things, and must respect facts and science. Many countries, including China, have opposed from the outset the practice of adopting by vote the decision on addressing the threat of chemical weapons use, which goes beyond the scope of the Convention, and have opposed the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team. China's position in that regard remains unchanged.

At present, the politicization of the OPCW is extreme. A number of parties are often divided and in opposition to each other. China is concerned about that. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat will facilitate State parties' efforts to overcome their differences and revert to the practice of making decisions by consensus with a view to upholding the authority of the OPCW.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I would like to start by thanking the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was an important milestone in international security. We commend the success of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in overseeing the Convention and verifying the destruction of 99 per cent of declared stockpiles.

While almost all States parties have met their obligations under the Convention, a few continue to develop, acquire and deploy chemical weapons. The Syrian regime continues to flout the terms of resolution 2118 (2013). It has ignored its obligations to cooperate fully with the OPCW to make progress on the outstanding issues on its chemical weapons declaration.

This month marks the anniversaries of chemical weapons attacks at Khan Shaykhun in 2017 and Douma in 2018. We are unwavering in our commitment to hold the Al-Assad regime to account for its repeated uses of chemical weapons against its own people.

In Syria, the use of chemical weapons was both preceded and followed by disinformation. We are therefore concerned to see a similar pattern in Russian disinformation about chemical weapons in Ukraine. The use of chemical weapons in Ukraine would be a callous escalation, and we will hold any State that uses weapons of mass destruction to account. There must be no impunity for any State that develops, acquires or deploys chemical weapons anywhere under any circumstances.

With the entry into force of the Convention, the international community pledged to eliminate a class of weapons that inflicted appalling suffering in the past century. With that in mind, I welcome the Council's agreement on a press statement that reaffirms the objectives of the CWC (SC/14876). On its twenty-fifth anniversary, we must collectively recommit to the Convention. It has saved countless lives.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is an essential pillar of the non-proliferation regime and aims to spare humankind the catastrophic effects and scourge of the use of that kind of weapon of mass destruction. However, achieving the universality of the Convention will remain elusive as long as there are those that continue to provide immunity to Israel and its arsenal of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which represent a serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

The Convention and its executive body have made significant achievements, most important in assisting the Syrian Government in 2013 to get rid of its chemical-weapon stockpiles, for which the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) won the Nobel Peace Prize. However, implementing the Convention has faced serious challenges given the United States of America's reluctance to comply with its obligations to destroy its chemical-weapon stockpiles within the set deadlines, in addition to the manipulation of its provisions and politicization of its objectives in recent years by the Governments of some Western countries that used it as a tool to target and blackmail Governments of countries that refuse to submit to their dictates.

This month of April also reminds us of two acts of military aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. The first was carried out by the United States of America on 7 April 2017, targeting the Al-Shayrat airbase, and the second was perpetrated by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France, targeting the Scientific Studies and Research Centre and other sites on 14 April 2018. Those unprovoked and unjustified attacks require that the perpetrators be held accountable. Those that raise the issue of holding chemical weapons users accountable must also demand the accountability of States that provide support to terrorist groups and facilitate their acquisition and use of toxic chemicals and weapons.

Accountability is an important and sensitive legal issue that must be anchored in professional and objective investigations, based on conclusive and tangible evidence and in accordance with impeccable legal mechanisms. Accountability is not achieved by manipulating provisions of conventions, violating the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, establishing illegitimate mechanisms that carry out their work in violation of internationally applicable legal standards or following wrong and unprofessional working methods.

The Syrian Arab Republic has fully cooperated with the OPCW and has fulfilled its obligations under the CWC. Syria joined the Convention voluntarily and in good faith and showed readiness to implement it immediately, even before its entry into force. Syria provided detailed information, including the names, types and quantities of chemical agents, types of munitions, production and storage facilities, and then

destroyed its stocks and production facilities through joint efforts and in record time. That was confirmed by the relevant reports of the OPCW.

The Syrian Arab Republic has consistently provided both the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the OPCW Technical Secretariat with information about terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (Da'esh), the Al-Nusra Front and other affiliated entities seeking to possess chemical weapons and toxic chemicals and their attempts to use those against Syrians, including by staging fabricated chemical attacks to implicate the Syrian Arab Army.

Recently, my delegation conveyed information about the possession of toxic chemicals and missiles by the Al-Nusra Front/Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which were modified and armed with those toxic chemicals in Idlib governorate in coordination with the Turkish regime forces in preparation for fabricating a chemical incident. The possession and use of chemical weapons and toxic chemical substances by those terrorist groups is extremely dangerous. My delegation therefore stresses the need to seriously address that important information and considers that the full and accurate implementation of the provisions of the CWC by all States parties is crucial to preventing terrorist groups from possessing such weapons.

Syria is keen to hold a high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the Director-General of the OPCW as soon as possible in order to address all issues related to the work of the OPCW teams according to a specific and comprehensive agenda that allows for tangible progress to be achieved. Syria once again welcomes the visit of the Declaration Assessment Team in the context of holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations. It expresses its readiness to receive the team, except for one member whose participation my country previously objected due to his lack of objectivity and professionalism. It is well known that the OPCW has hundreds of experts who are capable of carrying out this task — unless the aim is to create a problem or false impressions about Syrian cooperation. My delegation therefore rejects the attempts by certain countries that seek to discredit Syria's seriousness in fulfilling its obligations, and considers the repeated accusations by certain States against Syria to be baseless.

As for the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), Syria has spared no effort in providing the FFM with all

the necessary cooperation and facilitation for it to discharge its mandate. However, the FFM did not comply with the agreed terms of reference or the provisions of the Convention. Rather, it deviated from the professionalism and independence required under its mandate. The FFM limited itself to conducting virtual investigations and receiving samples from others that it did not collect directly without verifying the chain of custody. It also relied on footage and videotapes from open sources fabricated by terrorist groups and their operators, in addition to listening to testimonies of people from terrorist groups.

My delegation expresses its deep concern over the delay and procrastination of the Fact-Finding Mission in completing its reports on incidents that Syria requested be investigated regarding the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups. There are incidents reported by Syria more than five years ago on which the FFM has still not submitted reports. I have not heard any remark in that regard.

In conclusion, the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention is an opportunity for us to renew the call to depoliticize the OPCW and preserve its technical nature, while addressing, in the meantime, the wrongful practices of its various teams.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Keçeli (Turkey):** We also thank High Representative Nakamitsu and her team for her briefing, for their tireless efforts and for their commitment to justice and international law.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) published the 102nd report of its Director-General last month. The report demonstrates that the outstanding issues relating to the Syrian regime's initial declaration persist. The OPCW Secretariat is still waiting for responses to enquiries it sent to the regime in October 2020 and July 2021 in relation to its chemical weapons, production facilities and chlorine cylinders used in the attack in Douma in 2018. The regime is using delaying tactics not to meet with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We expect concrete action from the Council to ensure that the regime fully cooperates with the DAT and immediately declares the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme to the OPCW.

The current investigations by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are important to establishing the truth about chemical-weapons use in Syria. Turkey takes note of the reports of the FFM establishing the use of chemical weapons in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016. We await the results of the further investigations carried out by the IIT on those attacks for the identification of the perpetrators.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is a grave violation of international law. We strongly condemn the repeated and well-documented use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime against its own people. It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for this heinous crime committed in Syria. We owe this to the victims.

Council members must leave their political differences behind and act in accordance with humanitarian law. Ending impunity is a prerequisite to achieving peace in Syria. The Council must be unified in urging the regime to cooperate with the OPCW without any further delay. This is key to preventing the recurrence of chemical-weapons use, be it in Syria or elsewhere in the world.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Ms. Ershadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): As a major victim of chemical weapons, Iran strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances.

Today is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which aims to protect humankind from the devastating repercussions and scourge of the use of chemical weapons. In this context, we reiterate our call for the full, effective, non-political and non-discriminatory implementation of the CWC and for preserving the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as well. We believe that politicizing the implementation of the Convention and exploiting the OPCW for politically motivated agendas endangers the Convention's credibility and the Organization's authority.

We also emphasize that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, professional, credible and objective in order to establish

the facts and reach evidence-based conclusions, and in so doing, it must strictly adhere to the provisions and procedures within the framework of the Convention. No deviation from the Convention shall be permitted.

Syria has made genuine efforts to meet its Convention's obligations and has proven its willingness to collaborate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat. However, it is disappointing that certain States parties to the CWC have politicized the Syrian chemical-weapons file, preventing the OPCW from confirming Syria's compliance with its obligations, which could have resulted in constructive dialogue and cooperation with the country.

We recognize the critical importance of the Syrian Government's efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Convention. We support the approach taken by the OPCW and Syria to the high-level dialogue and hope that this initiative will produce positive results. We welcome Syria's submission of its 100th monthly report to the OPCW, on 16 March 2022, on activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and their production facilities

Finally, we reiterate our recommendation that in order to improve the Council's efficiency and create a positive environment conducive to a constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW, the Council's deliberations on the chemical-weapons file should be less frequent and less repetitive.

**The President:** The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Because this is the last meeting under this month's United Kingdom presidency, I had to take this opportunity to say that we are very happy that the month is drawing to a close.

As we all know from popular movies and books, British diplomats and other officials are extremely considerate, polite, concerned about traditions and that they keep their word in any and all situations. However, during this month, Madam President, you managed to seriously undermine, if not completely destroy, that stereotype in your leadership as President of the Security Council.

There is no doubt that your presidency, Madam, will be studied in the textbooks of diplomacy as a counterexample of how a President of the Council should



behave, notwithstanding personal convictions or the interests his or her capital wants to pursue. Madam, you managed in a month's time to considerably undermine or even destroy both written and unwritten rules on which the trust and cooperation in the Council is based. Indeed, regardless of the geopolitical circumstances, the consequences of your actions will be felt for a long time

I do wish every success to the upcoming United States presidency of the Council. Against the background of your presidency, Madam, I believe it will be simple for our American colleagues to succeed. We will explain the details of that during the wrap-up today.

**The President:** I wish to assure Council members that the United Kingdom will continue to uphold the United Nations Charter and the Security Council's rules of procedure in our future terms as President, just as we have done in our current presidency.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Before adjourning the meeting, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of April, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of the United Kingdom to members of the Council and to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given us.

It has been a busy month and one which we have rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of other delegations and the representatives of the Secretariat, including the conference service officers, interpreters, verbatim reporters and the security staff.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of the United States good luck in the month of May.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*